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ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER

29 JUN 1977

Dear

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Enjoyed receiving your letter and apologize for taking so long to respond. I am delighted that you are throwing your hat in the Rhodes competition this year. I predict that you'll have an exciting and worthwhile time - win, lose or draw.

You asked what preparation I would recommend during the next few months. To begin with, there is little or nothing you can do in the way of absorbing factual data to prepare yourself for the interviews. The entire objective of the interviews is to explore the agility of your mind and your reasoning process. Therefore, I would recommend you concentrate on understanding both sides of issues. The Board will ask your opinion on some topic. No matter what side you elect, they will counter-argue from the opposite side. I would primarily arm yourself by thinking through the areas in which you have the greatest interests and expertise and being sure that you know why you hold the positions that you hold, and that you yourself can present the most logical arguments against your own positions. It would do no harm to read a little philosophy or logic just to get the sense of argumentation.

I would frankly have two or three topics on which you are well versed on the pros and cons and towards which you can slant the interview. One way to do this slanting is to mention these in some manner in your essay, as the Board will have read your essay very thoroughly and be prepared to challenge you on any contentious points in it. Not knowing your field of study at the Academy, I'm not sure just what topics to recommend. Clearly, you can simply pick some important topic of current affairs or something that would be obvious from your profession like whether we should have women on combatant ships. It would be better to select something from either your area of academic specialty or from some extracurricular activity that you relish. Still another obvious topic is whether a Rhodes scholarship would be beneficial to your career.

My personal evaluation is that my years at Oxford were of critical value to me in my naval career. What I gained from Oxford was primarily an improvement in the area of logical reasoning and thinking. It certainly was not the particular information I absorbed, but the participation in the tutorial process which is nothing more than a Socratic dialogue each week with your tutor. Here, too, the tutor generally takes the contrary view to expand your understanding of the topic and to force you to reason and argue in a logical manner. This type of intellectual sharpening can be of benefit to anyone in any profession. I would contend and suggest you consider taking a position with the Board but in any profession a more logical and rational reasoning process is of inestimable value.

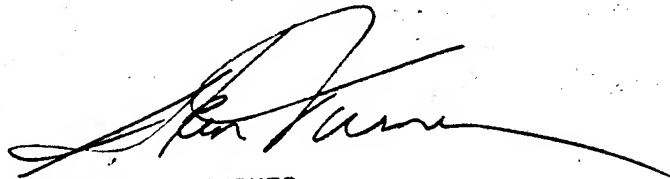
Some Board member, to be contentious, may contend that the Government should pay to send you wherever you need to go. I would simply reply that there is no reason for discrimination against you because you happen to be employed by the Government and that you very much want this experience and as a practical matter it is not available to you in any other form through Government subsidy. If pressed, I would point out that logical, open-minded thinkers are just as necessary in the military profession with the awesome responsibilities that reside there as they are in any other walk of life in our country.

You specifically asked if I would do it again and the answer is, by all means. I studied philosophy, politics and economics at Oxford; I chose that because it was the most broad offering and the one that seemed most closely related to my profession. In retrospect, those reasons were not valid. I gained the most value of all from the philosophy because it stressed the logical reasoning process even though it was least related to my career. I think you should consider selecting an area of study that you believe will be most expanding of your mental horizons.

You asked also about the details of the selection process. I have touched on these briefly. I would add that the Board will be quite familiar with you when you meet with them. You should choose your words carefully in your essay. They do not want a simple recounting of your life. They want some exploration of what makes you think the way you do. When you meet with the Board, they will spend only fifteen or twenty minutes with you. The

questions will seek to concentrate on your area of academic specialty or extracurricular interests. There will probably be somebody on the Board familiar with them. To some extent, your military status will perhaps leave the Board with less certainty as to how to interrogate you. This may in turn lead to more questions on current world affairs or items of current domestic concern than might be the case with some others. I would keep up with the newspapers and a news magazine or two between now and selection time. They may probe your cultural outlook by asking about music or art. Above all, don't try to bluff; be straightforward.

Don't hesitate to write again if I can be of any help.
I wish you every success.



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